

Environmental Community Letter

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

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Over One Billion Gallons Treated

Almost 10 years ago this month, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) began operating Treatment Facility A to pump and treat contaminated ground water at its Livermore site. The year was 1989, six years after LLNL environmental scientists found the first signs of contamination off site and informed the regulatory authorities.

The off-site contamination is from chemical solvents, used to clean aircraft parts when the site was a U.S. Naval Air Station in the 1940s, and LLNL operations in 1950s and 60s. There is no threat to human health or the environment from the contamination. It is far from any human contact, deep underground, and does not affect anyone's drinking water.

Since 1989 a lot has happened. On Monday, July 19, 1999, LLNL treated its billionth gallon of contaminated ground water.

Today there are four fixed treatment facilities, each costing in the neighborhood of \$1 million to build. There are also eight portable treatment units, three solar-powered treatment units, and a double handful of special-purpose treatment units. Most of these treatment units are unique, developed and built by LLNL environmental restoration specialists to speed the cleanup. All these special units cost considerably less than a fixed facility.

The annual funding from the Department of Energy (DOE) runs in the neighborhood of \$20 million for the combined LLNL environmental restoration at both the Livermore site and Site 300. This level of funding is expected to continue through 2006, when treatment facility construction is expected to be complete. Funding in the years after that is expected to cover operation and maintenance until cleanup is complete.

But the best news has been saved for last.

The contaminated ground water once stretched almost a quarter of a mile to the west of LLNL. It now reaches only a few yards on the other side of Vasco Road near East Avenue. And most of the contamination that remains is close to the regulatory limit.

More good news is that instead of the 230 kilograms of contaminants expected to be removed by 1999, LLNL has actually removed over 425 kilograms. Because of the increased contaminant volume removed and efficiency, we now predict that the LLNL Livermore cleanup can be completed almost 20 years sooner than originally expected!

Note: The graphic on the back of this page depicts the history of environmental restoration activities at the LLNL Livermore site. Please let me know if you would like a color copy.

Site 300 Progress

The Draft Site Wide Feasibility Study has been completed. This is the document that shows the different technologies that may be selected, singly or in combination, to treat the contaminants at Site 300. The schedule for future public workshops and meetings to present the proposed plan to clean up the site is expected to be determined shortly.

Environmental restoration at Site 300 features "green technologies." These are simple technologies with little or no energy consumption that take advantage of the natural terrain and weather at the site.

Off-site contamination has been further reduced. The solvent-contaminated ground water has been significantly reduced under Corral Hollow Road. No contamination from Site 300 has ever been found in Corral Hollow Creek.

Environmental update

After years of intense efforts, a permit to construct a facility to handle and treat hazardous waste was granted LLNL on May 27 by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). In the past waste was handled and treated under an interim status permit. The new permit allows the construction and operation of state-of-the-art waste handling facilities. There would not be any change in waste-handling or storage capacity when the facilities are completed, although outmoded facilities from the 1940s would be closed. The result would be waste management operations that are more efficient and safer than those today, resulting in enhanced protection of the environment and the public. The permit was appealed by Tri-Valley Communities Against A Radioactive Environment on July 2. A decision on that appeal by the DTSC is expected within a few months.

In other news, LLNL received a Certificate of Appreciation from DOE for its leadership in reuse and recycling to prevent pollution in operations, processes, and programs. Also, the Federal Environmental Executive awarded LLNL a Certificate of Achievement for reducing the solid waste stream and contributing to "Greening the Government."



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Historical Summary of Livermore Site Environmental Restoration Activities

